

Federal Election Commission

§ 7.15

be aware that contributing to candidates, political parties, or political committees subject to the jurisdiction of the Commission is likely to result in a conflict of interest.

(2) No Commissioner or employee shall display partisan buttons, badges or other insignia on Commission premises.

(b) Special Government employees are subject to the restrictions contained in this section for the entire 24 hours of any day on which the employee is on active duty status.

(c) Employees on leave, leave without pay, or on furlough or terminal leave, even though the employees' resignations have been accepted, are subject to the restrictions of this section. A separated employee who has received a lump-sum payment for annual leave, however, is not subject to the restrictions during the period covered by the lump-sum payment or thereafter, provided he or she does not return to Federal employment during that period. An employee is not permitted to take a leave of absence to work with a political candidate, committee, or organization or become a candidate for office despite any understanding that he or she will resign his or her position if nominated or elected.

(d) An employee is accountable for political activity by another person acting as his or her agent or under the employee's direction or control if the employee is thus accomplishing what he or she may not lawfully do directly and openly.

§ 7.12 Membership in associations.

Commissioners or employees who are members of nongovernmental associations or organizations shall avoid activities on behalf of those associations or organizations that are incompatible with their official governmental positions.

§ 7.13 Use of Government property.

A Commissioner or employee shall not directly or indirectly use, or allow the use of, Government property of any kind, including property leased to the Government, for other than officially approved activities. Commissioners and employees have a positive duty to protect and conserve Government prop-

erty including equipment, supplies, and other property entrusted or issued to him or her.

§ 7.14 Prohibition against making complaints and investigations public.

(a) Commission employees are warned that they are subject to criminal penalties if they discuss or otherwise make public any matters pertaining to a complaint or investigation under 2 U.S.C. 437g, without the written permission of the person complained against or being investigated. Such communications are prohibited by 2 U.S.C. 437g(a)(12)(A).

(b) 2 U.S.C. 437g(a)(12)(B) provides as follows: "Any member or employee of the Commission or any other person, who violates the provisions of subparagraph (A) shall be fined not more than \$2,000. Any such member, employee, or other person who knowingly and willfully violates this subsection shall be fined not more than \$5,000."

§ 7.15 Ex parte communications.

In order to avoid the possibility of prejudice, real or apparent, to the public interest in enforcement actions pending before the Commission pursuant to 2 U.S.C. 437g(A) (1) or (2):

(a) Except to the extent required for the disposition of ex parte matters as required by law (as, for example, during the normal course of an investigation or a conciliation effort), no Commissioner or employee involved in the decisional process shall make or entertain any ex parte communications.

(b) The prohibition of this section shall apply from the time a complaint is filed with the Commission pursuant to 2 U.S.C. 437(a)(1) or from the time that the Commission determines on the basis of information ascertained in the normal course of its supervisory responsibilities that it has reason to believe that a violation has occurred or may occur pursuant to 2 U.S.C. 437g(a)(2), and shall remain in force until the Commission has concluded all action with respect to the enforcement matter in question.

(c) Any written communication prohibited by paragraph (a) of this section shall be delivered to the Ethics Officer of the Commission who shall place the communication in the file of the case.